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For Immediate Release

FINAL GROUNDWATER CLEANUP BEGINS IN SRS'S M AREA

AIKEN, S.C., Sept. 20, 2005 – A significant groundwater remediation milestone has been reached in the Savannah River Site's (SRS) M Area, setting the stage for final area closure.

In the western sector of the A/M Area a large plume of chemical contamination, consisting mainly of solvents, emanates from the closed M Area Settling Basin. A cleanup technology called Dynamic Underground Stripping (DUS) has been placed into operation to aggressively remove the source of this contamination. Groundwater cleanup, coupled with ongoing demolition in M Area's former reactor materials production facilities, is helping to accelerate final closure of M Area.

From 1958 to 1985, the M Area Settling Basin and associated areas received process effluent that primarily contained solvents. SRS researched various technologies before selecting DUS, a petroleum industry technology modified for environmental remediation. DUS was developed by the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the University of California, Berkeley, with DOE funding. DUS is a combination of technologies involving the injection of steam into the subsurface to rapidly remove contaminants. Sophisticated computer imaging techniques permit continuous monitoring of the subsurface during operation.

The DUS technology extracts material 15 times faster than soil vapor extraction and 75 times faster than pump-and-treat systems, two more common groundwater cleanup technologies. DUS is especially effective when used in a smaller area, close to a concentrated waste source, like that of the M Area Settling Basin.

At the settling basin site, which covers about three acres, the DUS system is removing significant levels of solvents that were disposed into the basin from the production process in M Area's facilities. It is estimated that more than one million pounds of solvents underlying this area will be removed in a cleanup campaign that will last about 40 months. In comparison, using standard cleanup methods, it would take more than 200 years to remove this amount of contamination.

"We're very excited to have this system up and running," says Michael Graham, Area Project Manager for Soil & Groundwater Closure Projects, which manages soil and groundwater cleanup work across the site. "Completing this work safely and successfully is critical to reaching our goal of final area closure."

SRS is owned by the Department of Energy and operated by a team led by Washington Group International.

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